

NCSA 2013 President's Award
Meri-Jane Rochelson
Professor of English, Florida International University

She began, after graduating from the University of Chicago, moving south away from cold winters and to the warmth of the Floridian sun, where she has made her career for over twenty-five years at Florida International University. There she has served, unsurprisingly, in many capacities; she is currently a Full Professor and Associate Chair in English. It's unclear how she manages to do so much, since her professional career is bursting at the seams with community guest lectures alongside professional conference presentations, numerous book reviews, and an impressively long list of article publications and conference presentations.

A colleague, Heidi Kaufman, notes that "it is impossible to study the *fin de siècle* or Anglo-Jewish literary history without considering Professor Meri-Jane Rochelson's extraordinary contributions to these fields." While her many scholarly journal articles reflect the developing interests of her literary scholarship, drawing from her dissertation work in her address of George Eliot and then Amy Levy, a review of her long list of publications reveal that Israel Zangwill is the author whose career has shaped her own. Following up on her 1994 co-edited collection, *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, Meri-Jane published Zangwill's 1892 novel, *Children of the Ghetto*, in 1998. This text, widely regarded as the first Anglo-Jewish fiction bestseller, thanks to Meri-Jane, is not only available to undergraduates and scholars alike, but her archival research and skillful introduction culturally locate the novel for its readers. Her recovery of this work thus furthers our understanding of the complexities of Jewish writing within 1890s' literary culture. Her interest has remained with Zangwill, culminating in her biographical study of him, *A Jew in the Public Arena: the Career of Israel Zangwill*, which was published in 2008 and in paperback in 2010. Meri-Jane's portrait is of both the personal and the literary lives of this prolific writer, and her beautifully written study traces the evolutions of his career and life with lucidity and grace. Reviewers have universally proclaimed the work's merits, noting the ways in which it contributes to new directions in subsequent studies of the era and Zangwill's impact upon it.

While her mentoring and teaching skills are felt by most who know her, she has always also been a very active contributor to the organizations of which she is a loyal member. She thus served two terms as a Board member before joining the Executive Committee of NCSA as Secretary in 2002. From that position, she became President 2006-2012, and set a very high bar for six years, moving the Association into the twenty-first century by developing its web presence and ensuring it served its members with fiscally responsible investments; Meri-Jane was always thinking of ways to enhance the Association, whether it involved a consortium to Andrew Mellon for database access or ensuring the best online placement of NCS articles. Her oversight was always prompt, efficient, and courteous, as she managed to do it all, and to do it all well; she is an amazingly speedy email correspondent but also picks up the phone when matters need more than words on a screen. She has unquestionably been an incredibly valuable and valued mentor to many of us in the room today and far beyond these walls. I have to say, too, that she is a model of responsive generosity in her continued work for and support of NCSA. It is a great delight to me to be able to acknowledge her long service and extraordinary contributions to nineteenth century studies with this President's Award, and I know she will be an active member of our Senior Advisory Council and at our future conferences.

Lucy Morrison
NCSA President
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